

Message Text

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10

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /075 W

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R 271437Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8337

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

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CAIRO PLEASE PASS ALEXANDRIA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT ET (YOHANNES, ACTING PATRIARCH)

SUBJ: BIOGRAPHIC: ABUN YOHANNES, ACTING PATRIARCH OF THE
ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (EOC)

REF: ADDIS ABABA 2393 (NOTAL)

THERE FOLLOWS BIO MATERIAL THUS FAR AVAILABLE ON
THE EOC'S NEW ACTING PATRIARCH:

1. HIS BEATITUDE ABUNA YOHANNES WAS, IN HIS YOUTH, KNOWN
AS ABA (FATHER) BEGRE MASKEL. HIS FATHER WAS THE REV.
GEBRE YESUS AND HIS MOTHER WZO. (MRS) WOLETE YOHANNES
MIRETU. YOHANNES WAS BORN ON JULY 12, 1890 ETHIOPIAN
CALENDAR (AD 1898) IN THE PROVINCE OF ERITREA, REPORTEDLY
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IN ADI UGRI.

2. AT AGE FOUR HE WAS SENT TO A MONASTERY (UNNAMED) TO LEARN TO READ AND WRITE AND TO BEGIN HIS RELIGIOUS TRAINING FOR THE DEACONATE. AT AGE 12 HE MOVED TO THE PROVINCE OF TIGRE WITH HIS TUTOR, ONE ABA KIDANE MARIAM. HE ENTERED A SECOND MONASTERY (UNNAMED) AND CONTINUED HIS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

3. HAVING COMPLETED THE COURSE OF INSTRUCTION OFFERED BY THIS SECOND MONASTERY, YOHANNES TRANSFERRED TO THE FAMOUS MONASTERY OF DEBRE LIBANOS IN SHOA PROVINCE IN THE YEAR 1914 ETHIOPIAN CALENDAR (AD 11722). HE CONTINUED HIS THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION THERE UNDER THE DIRECT SUPERVISION OF THE ABUNA ABRAHAM, A BISHOP OF THE EOC.

4. ABUNA ABRAHAM WAS EVENTUALLY TRANSFERRED TO AN EGYPTIAN EPISCOPATE. GEBRE MASKEL, THEN ALREADY KNOWN AS ABUNA YOHANNES, ACCOMPANIED HIM. HE WAS SELECTED FOR THIS HONOR BECAUSE OF HIS ABILITY. AFTER WITNESSING THE ENTHRONING OF ABUNA ABRAHAM IN EGYPT, HE TOOK A SHORT THEOLOGICAL COURSE AND "WAS DECLARED A MONK." (COMMENT: TRADITION REQUIRES THAT THE PRIMATE OF ETHIOPIA BE OR HAVE BEEN A MONK AS A CONDITION PRECEDENT TO HIS APPOINTMENT TO HEAD THE EOC. END COMMENT).

5. YOHANNES THEN RETURNED TO ETHIOPIA "TO SERVE THE CHURCH AND HIS COUNTRY IN VARYING CAPACITIES." HE IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHURCHES, SCHOOLS AND CLINICS IN ADOWA, MAKALLE AND IN THE REMOTEST AREAS OF TIGRE PROVINCE -- THE PROVINCE OF ORIGIN OF HIS PARENTS.

6. THE ABUNA HAS ATTENDED SEVERAL (UNSPECIFIED) CHURCH CONFERENCES IN ETHIOPIA AND ABROAD AS A PARTICIPANT OR THE HEAD OF HIS DELEGATION. HE WAS THE BISHOP OF TIGRE PROVINCE BEFORE ASSUMING HIS CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES AS ACTING PATRIARCH OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. REPORTEDLY THE ABUNA YOHANNES SPEAKS AMHARIC, TIGRYNIA, ITALIAN, ARABIC AND ENGLISH.

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7. COMMENT: THE BULK OF THE FOREGOING MATERIAL IS TAKEN FROM AN EARLY DRAFT OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY OF THE ABUNA YOHANNES. WE HAVE ADDED SOME INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US. THIS MATERIAL SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH REFTEL. END COMMENT.

DECONTROL UPON RECEIPT.
HUMMEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION, RELIGIOUS LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 27 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS02470
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760076-0037
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976027/aaaaaflk.tel
Line Count: 115
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 ADDIS ABABA 2393
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 APR 2004 by woolflhd>; APPROVED <07 JUL 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BIOGRAPHIC: ABUN YOHANNES, ACTING PATRIARCH OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (EOC)
TAGS: PINT, ET, (YOHANNES, ABUN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006